

Not Your Mother's Christian Fiction

By Chawna Schroeder

Once upon a time, Grace Livingston Hill began the genre now known as Christian fiction. Because of her and the early works of the first CBA (Christian Booksellers Association) novelists like Janette Oke, the doors were opened for authors to write stories with clear Christian messages in a market that was increasingly antagonistic toward faith elements in story. Unfortunately, because of them, many readers now classify Christian fiction as prairie romances with a strong evangelistic theme.

This Is No Longer True.

Yes, a large percentage of CBA novels still target the non-Christian, and we need those novels. But at the same time, many CBA authors have become aware that the majority of their readers are likely to be Christians already. So while an evangelistic thread may exist, many Christian novels now focus on meeting the needs of their core readership—other Christians—by letting their characters wrestle with the issues we face as Christians.

More Issues Require More Forums.

As a result, almost no topic is tabooed and nearly every major genre is now represented in CBA. We still have the sweet romance and quiet Amish tale. But it's just as likely you will find books on the shelf with murder, espionage, dragons, and heavy topics like pornography, suicide, and homosexuality. What isn't the main concern as much as how the topics/genres are handled.

Is This Wrong?

Not necessarily. As I said, we need the evangelistic and the sweet romance. I have enjoyed both in the past and will do so again in the future. But I also like exciting adventures with plenty of danger to spike my adrenaline and stories that challenge my current faith instead of trying to convert me again.

Discernment MUST Be Used.

Not every genre is appropriate for every reader. You don't want gun battles and corpses? Stay away from thrillers and murder mysteries. Leary of the magical? Fantasy is probably not for you. But because it is not for you does not mean it is un-Christian or that it's wrong for other readers.

So the Next Time You're Tempted To Complain...

...please, please think twice. Yes, things do occasionally slip past the gatekeepers and need to be noted. But is what you object to truly wrong, evil, overly explicit, and unbiblical—or simply not for you?